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ABSTRACT

The Academic Enrichment and Learning Skills Center at Indiana State University came into being primarily because of the reading problems among the student body. The center has two language laboratories, each having 30 positions. Emphasis in designing the physical plant was placed on attractiveness and quiet. Teaching machines such as the Tachomatic 500, the Shadowscope, and the Craig Reader as well as personal help such as tutoring in special areas of difficulty are available for student use. The center is open free to all registered students except for those registered in a special remediation course. Students graduating in the lowest 30 percent of their high school classes are registered in this noncredit course during the spring semester and the summer sessions. The course emphasis is upon skill development in reading, studying, testing, writing term papers, and work in special areas of need. The center is widely used by foreign students to improve their English proficiency and by doctoral students to acquire foreign language proficiency. (AW)

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An Enrichment and Learning Skills

Center for Student Aid

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Epictetus once stated that "Only the educated are free". Aristotle was asked how much educated men were superior to the uneducated: "As much", said he, "as the living are to the dead."

Foremost in the problem areas of education is the failure to teach reading in the course of the ongoing educative process. It is estimated that 20% of college freshmen have reading problems. Much of the dropout statistic can be traced to the inability to read effectively. It is generally conceded that the inability to read well lies at the base of most of the academic failures. In many of these cases "readiness to read" has been ignored.

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Where does the readiness problem begin? Of course, it begins at home. Some children, whether among majority or minority groups, grow up in an atmosphere of commands and rarely have the opportunity to converse with members of the family. We can say that it is a problem that is observable from the first grade. I am aware that the question of "readiness" to read is no longer recognized or is in disrepute. However, it is doubtful that this latest turn in the teaching of reading will catch on very fast. Readiness is an ongoing need so long as new areas of study open up for the individual. When a teacher receives a class of first graders they are rarely ready for the language of the teacher or the rapid pace of the reading text. Rather, the first graders are in need of vocabulary development and the stabilization of visual acuity both of which require specific teaching. Many children arrive at the first grade experience with little to work from insofar as vocabulary is concerned and with limited knowledge of following directions.

Readiness takes several forms. For example, many black children live in the ghettos of large cities. Often the concepts of these children are not as one with the school program. Teachers must understand that the experiences of these children are not necessarily deficient, but are different. Teachers are largely sympathetic to the Spanish speaking child because his entire language base is different but they are often less patient with the black child who already "speaks English". Black children from the ghettos have often learned to shut out situations and elements of their environments because they are over stimulating. They then, very naturally, shut off elements of the classroom procedures because of their strangeness and thus fail to learn what we are teaching. A program of readiness to learn is clearly needed in thousands and thousands of cases each school year. We, as educators, must comply with meeting

the needs of this vast group of students. Readiness to read is crucial to the problem of the teaching of reading. Children who come to school as "different" must be looked upon as coming from deviant backgrounds rather than subnormal. The attitudes of teachers often create very negative environments for any child who is widely different from the norm. This will include the overactive child, the non-participant, and the culturally different.

Ben Reifel analyzes cultural factors affecting social adjustment of Indians and emphasizes four principal differences between the American way of life and the traditional pattern of Indian life.

"1. While the thinking of the dominant culture is future-oriented, Indians may be prone to live in the present--to take care of their needs today and to let tomorrow take care of itself. While the thinking of the dominant culture has at its roots the idea of a "mastery over nature," the Indians believe in a "harmony with nature." Reifel emphasizes this difference in behavior: the dominant society lives in a state of anticipation, whereas Indians find the essence of living in the present.

2. Viewing time, in terms of hours and minutes, with subservience to clocks and calendars, is not important to the Indian way of life.

3. Saving as a means of achieving economic development has not been a part of Indian economic life. While competition is an integral part of the white man's behavior, cooperation is more characteristic of the Indian's.

4. Habituation to hard work, particularly for the men of the tribe, is not a part of the Indian system."[1]

1. Reifel, Ben. "Cultural Factors in Social Adjustment". Indian Education, No. 298, (April 15, 1957).

"- - the general behavior of a traditional Pueblo Indian child may be contrasted with that of his Anglo teacher in the following ways (Zintz, 1962, 1963).

The Pueblo Indian child is likely to be taught at home to value:	*The Anglo teacher is almost sure to place the highest value on:*
1. Harmony with nature.	*Mastery over nature.*
2. Mythology. (The supernatural is feared, and sorcerers and witches are thought to cause unexplained behavior.)	*Scientific explanations for everything (Nothing happens contrary to natural law.)*
3. Present-time orientation.	*Future-time orientation.*
4. Working to satisfy present need.	*Working to get ahead.*
5. Time as infinite.	*Efficient use of time. (Time can never be regained.*
6. Following the ways of the old people.	*Climbing the ladder of success.*
7. Cooperation.	*Competition.*
8. Anonymity.	*Individuality.*
9. Submissiveness.	*Aggression (socially acceptable).*
10. Humility.	*Striving to win.*
11. Sharing.	*Saving for the future.*

With such a value system the Pueblo child is unlikely to be sensitive to some of these admonitions from his teacher: 'Try to get through with the problem <u>first</u>'; 'What you did yesterday wasn't quite good enough. Do a little

better next time'; 'Everyone must read well.'"[2]

It is with these children that a positive and rich experience must be inaugurated that will enable them to function as a part of the class group. In the movement upward through the grades these children, with others, begin to fall by the way and to experience a plateau of learning. They are not given ample opportunity to integrate the initial learnings into their academic behavior and then are left by the way while the teacher presses onward. Too often these children comprise the so-called retarded group and they finally grow to accept the assumption that they can't read. It is at this point that students begin to believe that they are different and that they are of little worth. In a sense we are teaching them that they cannot learn to perform in the world of books and then they naturally become apathetic and discouraged. Some of these children, because of continual negative results from their efforts, accept that which to them is obvious. They cannot learn to read and hence the teacher looks on them as stupid. These are probably the most difficult students to revive. Their egos are damaged as well as their personal images. Positive expectations together with a sound and ongoing "readiness" program will do much to alleviate the abused self-image.

The foregoing comments are not intended to oversimplify the problem but rather to indicate that reading deficiencies at the university level begin long before the student presents himself at the university doors. No one level of education can be pointed to as solely responsible for the deficiencies. The students who have passed through academic doors from kindergarten (where we must be sure that no real academic materials are used) through secondary

2. *Zintz, Miles V. "Problems of Classroom Adjustment of Indian Children in Public Elementary Schools in the Southwest." Science Education, Vol. 46 (April, 1962), pp. 261-69.*

schools are shortchanged all along the way. Then the teachers of English in the secondary schools too often adopt a status attitude that results in failure to recognize that literature cannot be taught effectively when the students are unable to read the essays or other grade level materials. It has apparently been overlooked that reading can be taught more readily to mature students than to the very young. Question: Why are universities still refusing to require that teachers of the language arts at any level learn the fundamentals of teaching students to read? Every level along the academic path should assume some responsibility for the reading crisis. If teachers of English bypass the responsibility at the upper secondary levels, then specialists should be equipped with whatever they need in order to overcome this tremendous hurdle to the university.

The Academic Enrichment and Learning Skills Center at Indiana State University came into being primarily because of the problems of reading among the student body. It was first named The Learning Skills Center. It soon became apparent that this name in itself was a handicap. It only added to their feelings of inadequacy and humiliation. Hence, the name was changed and the Center was advertised in the school paper and in brochures as a Center for all students--even at the doctoral level. Indeed, speed reading and foreign languages (French, Spanish and German) particularly appeal to doctoral candidates.

There is another factor in the planning of the Center which was directed to the students with a fractured self-image and that is, the decor of the physical plant. It was designed to be attractive, quiet and tasteful. Too many centers such as this one are poorly housed and the furnishings are battered hand-me-downs from other offices.

The low-key operation of the Center is another factor in its favor. Students who come for aid find it in programmed materials, teaching machines or personal help such as tutoring in special areas of difficulty. All rooms are airconditioned for comfort.

The Center is open to all registered students without charge except for students who register for a course of remediation. This course is a non-credit requirement for a special group and is known as the Freshman Opportunity Program. Students who graduate in the lowest 30% of their high school classes are registered during the spring semester and in the first and second summer sessions. The course, F.O.P. 100, is given during each of these periods and the students pay a fee of $40 for participation in the course. It is the equivalent of three semester hours but is non-credit. The students are permitted to enroll in other courses up to 12 semester hours in the spring and for three during each of the two 5-week summer sessions. The F.O.P. 100 course meets daily in the summer for ten weeks. The course emphasis is upon skill development in reading, how to study, how to take a test, how to write a term paper and work in special areas of need. Reading skills are taught in several ways. Two books are used for one-to-one work and they are titled "Breaking the Reading Barrier" and "Power and Speed in Reading" published by Prentice-Hall and the author is Doris W. Gilbert. Tapes are used for reading that were prepared by Dr. Nancy Davis of Indiana University. Workbooks accompany these tapes. Two of the most popular machines for learning to read and for increasing the reading rate are the Tachomatic 500, with the Shadowscope, and the Craig Reader. Both of these programs are attractive and effective. The Craig Reader offers work at lower levels than the Tachomatic 500. However, each one offers eye discipline and a program for immediate check for reading comprehension. There are other

materials available for the Didactor and the Autotutor. The Hoffman Reader is another machine whose chief use in this Center is by foreign students who need to increase their vocabularies and improve their concept development in English. The first two courses in French, Spanish, and German are on tape and are widely used by doctoral students who are required to pass proficiency tests in a foreign language.

Tutoring is another service that is provided in the Center. There are four graduate assistants who are hired with attention to their major fields. Part time student help is hired who have major concentration in such areas as mathematics, English, psychology, geography, etc. The students also work as tutors. All part time students are required to become proficient in the use of all equipment in the Center.

There are two language laboratories in the Center, each having thirty positions. In other words, sixty persons may be seated at one time for one program or for a number of programs for groups or individuals.

The Academic Enrichment and Learning Skills Center was established through the use of University funds and is maintained as a student service center where every effort is made to make their visits rewarding. The constant use of the facility makes it clear that its existence is warranted and that it is fulfilling a very real need on this University Campus.

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